

Lightning - The Underrated Weather Hazard

Summer is the peak season for one of the nation's deadliest weather phenomena—lightning.



In the U.S., on average 73 people are killed each year by lightning.

Lightning is the #2

storm killer in the U.S., killing more than hurricanes or tornadoes. Only floods kill more. But the real story of lightning isn't the deaths, it's the injuries. Only about 10% of those struck are killed; 90% survive. However, the survivors often report a variety of long-term, debilitating symptoms, including memory loss, attention deficits, sleep disorders, numbness, dizziness, and stiffness in joints, irritability, fatigue, weakness, muscle spasms, depression, and an inability to sit for long.

Lightning Safety

Lightning safety is easy. But lightning safety is also inconvenient. It requires diligence and continual reinforcement and encouragement. Lightning safety is a multi-step process, with each step providing a decreasing level of protection – plan around the weather, and have a lightning safety plan.

***No Place Outside is Safe
During Thunderstorms!***

Step 1:

If you are planning to be outside, watch the weather forecast and know your local weather patterns. Plan around the weather to avoid lightning hazard.

Step 2:

If you are going to be outside anyway, stay near proper shelter and use the '30-30 Rule' to know when to seek proper shelter.

30-30 Rule': When you see lightning, count the time until you hear thunder. If this time is 30 seconds or less, seek proper shelter. If you can't see the lightning, just hearing the thunder is a good back-up rule.

Step 3:

Seek proper shelter when required. Don't hesitate, seek shelter immediately.

Proper Shelter:

The best shelter commonly available against lightning is a large fully enclosed substantially constructed building, e.g. your typical house. Stay off corded telephones. Stay away from electrical appliances, lighting, and electric sockets, and plumbing. Don't watch lightning from windows or doorways. If you can't get to a house, a vehicle with a solid metal roof and metal sides is a reasonable second choice. As with a house, avoid contact with conducting paths going outside: close windows, lean away from the door, put your hands in your lap, don't touch the steering

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wheel, ignition, gear shifter, or radio. Convertibles, cars with fiberglass or plastic shells, and open framed vehicles don't count as lightning shelters.

MYTH: *Cars are safe because the rubber tires insulate them from the ground.*

TRUTH: *Cars are safe because of their metal shell.*

Step 4:

If you can't get to proper lightning shelter, at least avoid dangerous locations and activities. Avoid:

- higher elevations;
- wide-open areas (including sports fields);
- tall isolated objects like trees, poles, and light posts;
- water-related activities like: boating, swimming (includes indoor pools), and fishing;
- golfing;
- open vehicles like farm tractors, construction vehicles, riding lawnmowers, golf carts (even with roofs); unprotected buildings like picnic pavilions, rain shelters, bus stops; metal fences and metal bleachers.

Step 5:

If you've made several bad decisions and are outside far away from proper shelter and lightning threatens, proceed to the safest location. If lightning is imminent, it will sometimes give a very few seconds of warning. Once you've spread out, use the lightning crouch; put your feet to-

gether, squat down, tuck your head, and cover your ears. When the immediate threat of lightning has passed, continue heading to the safest spot possible.

Step 6:

All deaths from lightning are cardiac arrest and stopped breathing. CPR and mouth-to-mouth-resuscitation are the recommended first aid, respectively.

MYTH: *Lightning victims are electrified. If you touch them, you'll be electrocuted.*

TRUTH: *It is perfectly safe to touch a lightning victim to give them first aid.*

NO LIGHTNING SAFETY GUIDELINES WILL GIVE 100% GUARANTEED TOTAL SAFETY, BUT THESE STEPS WILL HELP YOU AVOID THE VAST MAJORITY OF LIGHTNING CASUALTIES.

